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# Japanese *Jazu*

An Examination of English in Japanese Jazz Lyrics

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## **Abstract**

This thesis deals with language mixing in 20<sup>th</sup> century Japanese jazz, particularly the use of English. There have been multiple studies conducted on the language mixing phenomenon in Japanese pop-music (J-pop), a popular genre in Japan today. The results showcase that English is frequently used in J-pop, both inter-sentential and intra-sentential code-switching. The use of English has also been shown to have a wide array of functions. Similar research into jazz, a genre that was popular in early to mid-20<sup>th</sup> century Japan, is scarce. Jazz was popularized in Japan in the 20's when it became a metaphor for globalism and Japan's changing local identity. During World War II, it was banned due to its connection to the US and afterwards it came to represent the power of the US and an art of freedom. This thesis attempts to measure to which extent English is being used in Japanese jazz during the years 1928-1957 by analyzing 100 songs from compilation CD's. Furthermore, the study examines what type of language mixing can be seen. The results show that English is the most frequently used foreign language. The use of English greatly increases after World War II and English occurs in most songs released postwar. Full English verses are used, but also language mixing at sentence level.

*Keywords: Japanese, code-switching, English, jazz, language mixing*

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## **Conventions & abbreviations**

In this thesis, the modified Hepburn romanization system has been used for romanization of Japanese text. The Leipzig glossing rules have been used when glossing Japanese sentences and the abbreviations used are as follows:

DES	desiderative
IMP	imperative
NEG	negative

# 1. Introduction

Japan is generally regarded as a very monolingual and homogenous country. Despite this homogeneity, the Japanese language showcases much influence from foreign languages. In particular, Japanese contains an enormous number of English loanwords and the language can hardly be spoken today without using English in some way (Stanlaw 2004, p. 73). This has sparked much debate; some argue that it damages the Japanese language and culture, while some argue that it enriches and modernizes the language (Tomoda 2005, p. 2). Despite the large number of foreign loanwords, code-switching, i.e., switching to another language, is rare in daily conversations in Japan (Moody 2006, p. 211). Code-switching is, however, a prominent feature of Japanese music. Multiple studies have shown that English occurs in a majority of Japanese pop (J-pop) songs and that it is the most commonly used foreign language. J-pop artists use English for a wide array of functions which further reflects attitudes of that artist as well as their fanbase.

One area which has not received as much attention as J-pop is Japanese jazz. Jazz has been closely intertwined with the political environment, internationalization, and cultural identity of 20<sup>th</sup> century Japan. It was introduced in the 20's from Europe and America and grew to be very popular (Atkins 2001, p. 65). It came to represent Japan's participation in global trends and its relationship with the US (ibid.). However, following the start of World War II, it was labeled as the music of the enemy and consequently many popular jazz songs were banned (Nagaoka 2017, p. 30; Molasky 2017, p. 7). Yet, jazz made a comeback after Japan's defeat in 1945 when the occupation by American forces began. At the time jazz came to represent the cultural power of the victor, the US, and Japanese musicians largely made a living playing for the troops (Atkins 2001, pp. 168, 171). The Japanese cultural identity and traditional values were questioned and to some extent replaced by American ideals of modernity. This also affected jazz musicians for whom a dominant strategy of authentication became replicating American jazz (ibid., pp. 169, 185).

The aim of this study is to examine how English is used in Japanese jazz lyrics. Songs released before Japan's participation in World War II, during the American occupation and immediately after the occupation will be examined to see if the amount of English changes over time, as this was a period where the attitudes of the Japanese greatly changed. The percentage of songs containing English and how much English will be examined. The variables gender and original versus cover will also be considered to see if they affect the results. Then

the language mixing will be further investigated to see if there are any common features and if inter-sentential and intra-sentential code-switching occurs.

The primary research question of this thesis is as follows: to what extent is English used in jazz lyrics? The secondary goal is to investigate what type of language mixing occurs in the songs.

## **2. Background**

This chapter will provide the background of the study.

Section 2.1 discusses two results of language contact where foreign structures become more or less integrated into the Japanese speech community's linguistic repertoire. Subsection 2.1.1 introduces the process of borrowing words from other languages and gives a brief summary of Japan's extensive history of borrowing, why words are borrowed, and adaptations that loans undergo when integrating into Japanese. 2.1.2 introduces code-switching, why speakers code-switch, and its occurrence in Japan. Lastly, 2.1.3 briefly highlights three approaches to defining the difference between code-switching and borrowing.

Section 2.2 concerns language choice in Japanese music, especially English loanwords and code-switching. Subsection 2.2.1 introduces the big presence that English has in J-pop. 2.2.2 introduces different functions that English can have in Japanese music in general - global and local motivations, structural and metaphorical functions, how English has certain connotations in Japan that can be used to construct identities and how that in turn reflects attitudes towards English speaking communities. Lastly, 2.2.3 introduces the history of jazz in Japan before, during and after World War II, and situates its popularity and expression in relation to Japan's relationship to the US and itself.

### **2.1 Language contact in Japan**

#### **2.1.1 Lexical borrowing**

The term borrowing has been used to describe any transfer from structural features to whole clauses between two languages (Bullock & Toribio 2012, p. 5). Lexical borrowing, then, is the borrowing of single lexemes. In the case of Japanese, the borrowing of nouns, adjectives and verbs is commonplace; however, borrowing of other word classes such as pronouns and even articles has also been observed (Irwin 2011, p. 1).

The Japanese vocabulary consists of native Japanese words which form the base of the vocabulary, Sino-Japanese words that have been borrowed from Chinese, foreign loanwords, and combinations of these (Hasegawa 2014, p. 61). Until the modern era, Chinese has been the most prominent source of loanwords due to the Chinese impact on areas such as religion, philosophy, and medicine in Japan (Tomoda 2005, p. 17). These words are often seen as more sophisticated than native Japanese words (Hasegawa 2014, p. 61). Native words have made up a majority of the vocabulary until the late 20<sup>th</sup> century when Sino-Japanese words surpassed it in both distinct word count and frequency of use (*ibid.*, p. 63).



Foreign loanwords normally refer to words borrowed from Western languages but can also refer to Asian languages other than Chinese (ibid., p. 62). During the 14<sup>th</sup> through 16<sup>th</sup> century, Western languages such as Portuguese and Latin began bringing in new loanwords through merchants and missionaries (Tomoda 2005, p. 18). Dutch was the main source for borrowing during the Edo period (1603-1868) but was eventually replaced by English with the growth of England and the US as world powers, important trading partners and sources of new technology, as well as the spread of English language education in Japan (Tomoda 2005, p. 19). However, the English loanword influx was halted and largely erased as it became the language of the enemy during World War II and was actively campaigned against by the Japanese government (Irwin 2011, p. 56). Yet despite that, postwar the value of English increased again as it became the language of the American occupational forces, and since then English loanwords have come to make up a big majority of all loanwords entering the Japanese language (ibid., pp. 20, 27). By the 60's, the proportion of English loans in the loanword stratum had reached 85%, and Irwin writes that it likely has not changed much since (ibid.). Stanlaw (2004) reflects that in modern times, "English in Japan is like air: it is everywhere." (p. 1). Although foreign loanwords in total make up around one third of the entire vocabulary, in daily conversations between Japanese speakers it only makes up around 10 percent of the word count, meaning that these words are seldom fundamental but rather add stylistic nuances (Hasegawa 2014, p. 64).

The most straight forward reason for borrowing is to fill a lexical gap, for example with the importation of new goods or technologies (Tomoda 2005, p. 27). The lexical gap can be niche where the loanwords semantically only differ slightly from the Japanese equivalent, for example to denote Western vis-à-vis Japanese style (Kay 1995, p. 71). Loanwords can also fully replace native words, often due to their foreign appeal. Foreign loanwords often have modern, trendy, or sophisticated connotations, and can be used as attention-grabbers (ibid., p. 74). Due to their vagueness for Japanese speakers, they can also be used as euphemisms where the Japanese equivalent is too direct or has negative connotations (Tomoda 2005, p. 30). Foreign loanwords are particularly frequent in Japanese advertising, perhaps because of advertising's reliance on affective language (Moody 2006, p. 211).

When words are borrowed, they are typically adapted to fit the recipient language's phonological structure as well as changing orthographically. As for Japanese, almost all modern loanwords are written in the phonetic script katakana (Kay 1995, p. 69). Japanese phonotactics only allow CV syllables except for the syllabic nasal /N/ and any pure vowel syllables; thus, most consonant clusters are broken up with vowels (ibid.). For example, 'cake'

became *kēki* and ‘bed’ became *beddo*. Phonemes that do not exist in Japanese get the closest equivalent, for example /ti/ becomes [tɕi] as in *chiketto* from the English ‘ticket’ (ibid.). However, more recently there have been new syllables created to get a pronunciation closer to the original sound, for example allowing [ti] (ibid.). Thus, depending on when in time the borrowing takes place the resulting forms may vary. The final form is also affected by whether the source is auditory or written (Nyman 2012, p. 37).

Borrowed words can also undergo morphological and semantic shifts. One such morphological process is back clipping where the last part of the word is removed (Kay 1995, p. 70). English loans often become very long due to phonological changes and for that reason are often back clipped. For example, ‘McDonalds’ became [makudonarudo] and eventually [makku]. Another common process loanwords undergo is blending of two words (ibid.), for example *pokemon* from the English words ‘pocket’ and ‘monster’. As to semantic shifts, Kay (1995) writes that essentially all borrowed words inevitably change meaning as they enter a new culture, whether that be a slightly different nuance or a radically new meaning (p. 71). Two common types of changes are narrowing and broadening of meaning (Irwin 2011, p. 154). An example of narrowing is the Japanese word *tsuna* which typically only denotes canned tuna (in other contexts the fish is called *maguro*). Another interesting process is *wasei-eigo* (literally ‘made-in-Japan English’), where two English words are compounded to create a new word whose meaning “deviates from what the semantic outcome of an identical compound would be in the donor language.” (ibid., p. 155). An example is the word *pēpādoraibā* from the English ‘paper’ and ‘driver’ which refers to someone who has a driving license but little or no experience driving.

### **2.1.2 Code-switching**

Another process that occurs due to language contact is code-switching (CS). CS refers to when bilinguals (or multilinguals) alternate between two or more different dialects or languages within the same sentence or conversation (Gardner-Chloros 2010, p. 4). This can be anything from inserting single words to alternating between languages for larger segments of discourse (Bullock & Toribio 2012, p. 2). CS has generally been misunderstood by the public as a sign of language degeneration (ibid., p. 4) and is viewed as something negative in many communities (Holmes & Wilson 2017, p. 47). However, Bullock and Toribio (2012) argue that CS generally requires good proficiency in both languages and their structures and is an additional communicative resource available to bilinguals (p. 8).

Speakers can code-switch for several different reasons, for example to negotiate relationships and identities between participants. Holmes and Wilson (2017) write that a speaker can signal shared group membership and construct one's ethnic identity by switching to a certain language, and in the same way a speaker can switch to another language to distance themselves from the addressee (pp. 35-36). A switch can be motivated by a change of status or formality between participants where different languages express and construct different relationships (ibid., p. 36). It might be easier to talk about a topic in a certain language, or it may achieve some rhetorical effect rather than conveying information (ibid., pp. 38-39). A type of CS that cannot be described by changes such as those previously mentioned is 'metaphorical switching', also called 'code-mixing', wherein a speaker draws upon the different associations that languages have in order to construct their identity within a piece of discourse (ibid., pp. 42-43). For example, one language might be associated with being professional and one with being friendly and of equal status to the addressee, and a person might switch between these two to construct themselves as both professional and friendly (ibid.).

Some linguists argue that there are universal linguistic constraints on CS, while some argue that these rules have many exceptions and have not been tested enough (Holmes & Wilson 2017, p. 46). The resulting forms of CS can differ widely depending on function, what context it occurs in, and the speaker's language proficiency (Bullock & Toribio 2012, p. 2). Myers-Scotton (1993a) divides CS into 'intra-sentential CS', i.e., switching within sentences, and 'inter-sentential CS', i.e., switching at clause boundaries (p. 480). Inter-sentential CS is exemplified in 1) which displays a dialogue between a farmer and a worker in Kenya. The local variety Lwadiakho is the speakers' mother tongue and English and Swahili are the official languages of the country associated with education, authority, and interethnic communication (ibid., p. 477). In the interaction, the worker refuses the farmer's request for a gift of money and code-switches to English and Swahili as a way of distancing themselves (ibid.). The switches occur at clause boundaries:

- 1) Farmer (in response to a question as to what type of "hunger" the farmer is complaining about; in Lwadiakho):

*Inzala ya mapesa, kambuli* 'Hunger for money, I don't have any.'

Worker (English): *YOU HAVE GOT A LAND.*

(Swahili): *UNA SHAMBA* 'You have [a] farm.'

(Lwadiakho): *Uli nu mulimi* 'You have land (farm).'

Farmer (Lwadiakho): *Mwana mweru* - 'My brother -'

Worker (interrupting; in Lwidakho, then English):

*Mbula tsiendi* 'I don't have money.'

*CAN'T YOU SEE HOW I AM HEAVILY LOADED?*

(Myers-Scotton 1993b, pp. 82-83, as quoted in Myers-Scotton 1993a)

Example 2) showcases intra-sentential CS where a young Moroccan living in the Netherlands switches between Dutch (written in capitals) and Arabic within the same sentence:

2) *Eh, ana- IK HEBE GEWOON EH ZO 'N BEERTJE BEKOCHT VOOR*

uh I I have just uh such-a little bear bought for  
*STOELEN ENZO WEET JE WEL, VIND IK LEUK, u kont ana бага nešri*  
chairs and-so you-know, I-like-that, and I-was I wanting I-buy  
*dik s-SMURFEN VOOR DE AUTO.*

those the-smurfs for the car

‘Uh, I – I just bought such a little bear for chairs and so, you know, I like that, and I wanted to buy those smurfs for the car.’

(Nortier 1990, p. 216, as quoted in Myers-Scotton 1993a)

Code-switching in Japan is almost entirely unobserved except for within Korean and Chinese immigrant communities according to Moody (2006, p. 211), despite the considerable number of loanwords. Moody further writes that Japan is a “monolingual culture that does not support code switching.” (ibid.). Gottlieb (2008) writes that although language diversity has historically not been encouraged, to claim that Japan is monolingual disregards the fact that Japan has six years of compulsory English learning (p. 2). CS has in fact been observed in Japan in some studies, for example by Azuma (1997) who gathered data from two interactions where all speakers were native Japanese and the conversations occurred in Japan; one interaction was conversations between female college-students who had studied a year in the US, and one was of interactions on three radio stations between DJs and listeners, as well as the DJ introducing songs (ibid., p. 2). The study found that although Japanese was the predominant language, code-switching from Japanese to English was also observed (ibid., p. 3). Both inter-sentential and intra-sentential CS occurred, and the switching ranged from single nouns to full clauses (ibid.).

Moreover, CS is not restricted to spoken language but can also occur, and often does, in text. It has been found in various historical texts (Gardner-Chloros 2010, p. 20), and is

nowadays frequently found on the internet, in poetry and music (Bullock & Toribio 2012, p. 12). A much-studied area where English has been found to play a prominent part is Japanese music.

### **2.1.3 Loanword or code-switching?**

The difference between CS and borrowing is a much-discussed topic; some scholars base it on structural differences or the motivation behind the usage, while some reject clear categories and instead view it as a continuum. Moody (2006) defines loanwords as individual lexical items that can be either integrated loans or unassimilated ‘nonce borrowings’ depending on how nativized and accepted they are (p. 212). On the other hand, CS he defines as involving longer structures such as phrases or clauses (ibid.). Nonce borrowings can appear spontaneously in the speech of bilinguals, for example due to a lack of vocabulary or where there is no equivalent word in one language. Like Moody, Holmes and Wilson (2017) do not define nonce borrowings as CS, but for the reason that the speaker does not have a genuine choice about which language to use (p. 44). They write that single lexical items can be CS and instead differentiate between loanwords and CS based on the motivation behind the switch (ibid.). Alternatively, Gardner-Chloros (2010) argues that both CS and loanwords can fill lexical gaps (p. 32). As both nonce borrowings and CS can occur in bilingual speech and their structural differences are unclear it is viewed as a continuum for some: borrowings start off as CS and then become more integrated into a language, eventually becoming established loanwords (ibid.).

## **2.2 Popular music in Japan**

### **2.2.1 English in J-pop**

Code-switching to English and using English loanwords is commonplace in J-pop and there have been many studies investigating to what extent English is being used. J-pop is a genre that is usually Western influenced but also retains “something Japanese”, and Japanese lyrics are especially important for nationwide popularity (Hosokawa 1999, p. 519). Multiple studies have shown that English is the most common foreign language in J-pop and that it occurs in most songs. Some examples are: Moody (2000; 2001, as quoted in Moody 2006) who found that nearly two-thirds of the 307 songs examined contained English; Takahashi and Calica (2015) who found that English accounted for around 15% of all words in the 100 songs examined; Stein (2023) who found that around 80% of 120 songs contained English; Nyman (2012) who found that around the majority of 29 songs contained code-switching to English and English

loanwords. Stanlaw (2004) found that most of the J-pop songs he examined contained both English loanwords written in katakana and Roman letters (p. 124). Moreover, he also found that English was extensively used in areas other than lyrics such as names of singers or groups and song titles (*ibid.*).

What “English” specifically refers to differs in the different studies. Neither Moody (2000; 2001, as quoted in Moody, 2006) nor Takahashi and Calica (2015) differentiate between CS and loanwords; both studies base their data on written lyrics and define English as text written in Roman letters. Thus, they exclude loanwords written in katakana and make no distinction between more or less nativized words that are written in Roman letters. Nyman instead defines CS as text written in Roman letters and loanwords as written in katakana (2012, p. 62). She identifies a type of code-switching called “code-switching for visual representation” where the switch occurs orthographically for visual effect (*ibid.*, p. 73). Likewise, Moody and Matsumoto (2003) write that a record company can choose to render an English cognate of a loanword in Roman letters instead of katakana to increase the orthographic variation in the lyrics (p. 5). Instead of basing the data on written text, Stein (2023) determines the degree of nativization of borrowings acoustically and differentiates between nativized words and non-nativized words (ch. 2, para. 4). The distinction is based on integration processes such as the insertion of additional vowels to match Japanese’s strict C(j)V syllable structure and substitution of sounds not in the Japanese sound system (*ibid.*).

English words, phrases, and full sentences all seem to occur in J-pop lyrics (e.g., Takahashi & Calica 2015; Moody & Matsumoto 2003; Nyman 2012). Takahashi and Calica (2015) found that around half of 100 popular J-pop songs contained English clauses and sentences, 14 songs contained only single lexemes, and seven songs had more than half of the lyrics completely in English (p. 869). The sentences tended to be grammatical but simple, which they argue enables the Japanese audience to understand the lyrics relatively easy (*ibid.*, pp. 869-870). Frequently observed single lexemes were verbs of motion, romance related words (e.g., love and heart), descriptive adjectives, pronouns and fillers, which they argue indicates that English is also used to express emotions and feelings (*ibid.*, p. 869). Stein (2023) however, found that English is rarely used for substantial parts of the lyrics, which he argues indicates that it is mostly used for stylistic nuances rather than referential functions (section 4.2, para. 1). Nyman (2012) found that out of the 29 songs examined, 20% contained CS, and verb-phrases and interjections were the most common structures to switch to (p. 70). No song contained only English lyrics, but a few songs had more than half of the lyrics in English (*ibid.*, p. 64). The

majority of code-switches were inter-sentential and the intra-sentential CS was mostly inserting nouns (*ibid.*, p. 71).

One variable that is frequently found to affect language usage is gender (Holmes & Wilson 2017) and Benson (2013) writes that East Asian popular music seems to be systematically tied to gender (p. 31). He writes that female singers frequently use more English than male singers (*ibid.*, p. 23). Conversely, Stein (2023) found in his study that male singers were far more apt to use English (ch. 3, para. 4). Likewise, Takahashi and Calica (2015) found male singers to use significantly more English, and all songs with more than 50% of the lyrics in English were sung by men (p. 869). Furthermore, they found a correlation between gender and age: younger male singers were found to use more English than older male singers, perhaps because of English's "cool" connotations (*ibid.*, pp. 869-870). No such correlation was found for female singers (*ibid.*).

### **2.2.2 Functions of English**

Language choice in music in Japan seems to be motivated by many different factors. Moody and Matsumoto (2003) suggest that English in J-pop is used to emulate the style of and to pay tribute to the English pop songs that have influenced the genre (p. 7). This is based on their finding that many English lyrics in J-pop songs are borrowed from famous Western lyrics or song titles (*ibid.*, p. 8). However, Stein (2023) suggest that this argument is likely biased by the stereotype that the Japanese are, as Hosokawa puts it, "expert imitators, but poor innovators" (Hosokawa 1999, p. 511). It has also been suggested that English is used to reach a global audience (Stein 2023), however, Jin and Ryoo (2014, p. 116) write that linguistically hybrid J-pop has rarely gained success in neighboring and Western countries, and Benson (2013, p. 116) writes that few East Asian songs, even those recorded entirely in English, receive commercial success beyond the region despite commercial motivations.

The motivations for using English, then, could showcase a bilingual creativity by Japanese writers for a Japanese audience (Moody & Matsumoto 2003). Stanlaw (2004) argues that the idea that English in J-pop is a consequence of the importation of Western music is a simplification; instead, he writes, English gives Japanese songwriters access to a wide range of images, metaphors, and allusions (pp. 101-102). English becomes a new linguistic resource through its nuances and can be used to add attention and evoke bold images, to seem more final or less intimate than the Japanese counterpart, etc. (*ibid.*, p. 105). Moody and Matsumoto (2003) identify a different type of language mixing called 'code-ambiguity', where instead of using

English or Japanese to substitute a word, the two languages are blended to the point that it becomes unclear which language is used (p. 5). In this way, a message is produced in both languages at the same time (ibid.).

Stanlaw (2004) argues that English also has structural functions, for example to make Japanese words stand out more by juxtaposing them with English words (ibid., p. 117). Likewise, Takahashi and Calica found that English was used for rhyming and repeating phrases to make Japanese sentences stand out (2015, p. 871). As previously mentioned, English written in katakana and Roman letters can also add orthographic variation to the lyrical sheet.

The use of English can have further implications for performing and negotiating cultural, ethnic and gender identities. Benson (2013) writes that when singers use a particular language they are performing or enacting a social identity rather than describing it: “In multilingual music scenes, therefore, language choice becomes a significant element through which artists enact identities, or project images of themselves and their music to audiences” (p. 25). For example, Pennycook (2003) examines language mixing in a Japanese rap group and finds both native Japanese words, Sino-Japanese words, foreign loans, and code-mixing to African American English (AAE), suggesting influence from African American rappers (p. 515). He argues that English here is not used for international communication, but as a way for the group to “perform the Other” (ibid.), a way of signifying identification with certain cultural groups (ibid., p. 517). He further argues that the usage of English in Japanese rap is a part of Japanese language and culture (ibid.). Likewise, Takahashi and Calica (2015) argue that English in J-pop is used to create images such as “modern”, “cool” or “sophisticated” through its associations with British and American culture. Furthermore, they found instances where the songs seemed to mimic American pop-music and thus seemed to be used to construct a Western identity (ibid.). Moody (2006) argues that code-ambiguity is a way of opposing the myth of Japanese uniqueness and redefining the Japanese ethnic identity, as Japanese “begins to function within a domain that is also occupied by English” (p. 220), and Stein (2023) suggests that rhyming is another way to ambiguate cultural and linguistic identity (section 4.1, para. 3).

Furthermore, music lyrics generally provide an insight into the attitudes and desires of a community (Moody 2006, p. 209). For example, Moody argues that code-ambiguity reflects a lot of Japanese people’s desire to extend the use of Japanese in communication between ethnic groups, which has previously largely been opposed (ibid., pp. 210, 220). Popular music in particular is often used as an instrument of social commentary in Japan, and English is often used to express it through metaphors and images (Stanlaw 2004, p. 103). The attitudes towards English are ambivalent: it is seen as both a threat to Japanese and Japanese culture, and



a prestigious, fashionable language (Stein 2023, section 4.3, para. 6). Because languages can have different associations such as those previously mentioned, speakers hold evaluative attitudes towards them and in turn towards the speakers of that language (Holmes & Wilson, 2017). Thus, language choice can reflect what connotations the Japanese have towards American and British culture, or global trends in general.

### 2.2.3 Jazz

Another popular genre in Japan, particularly in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, is jazz. Atkins (2001) writes that the Japanese fascination with jazz stems from jazz representing struggles of identity and creativity in Japan, in a way that no other single art has (p. 10). It is a genre that has been closely intertwined with the political environment, technological advancements, globalism, and cultural identity of Japan.

Popular music from America and Europe was introduced to Japan through the development of modern media such as records in early 20<sup>th</sup> century (Molasky 2017, p. 4). A domestic production of popular music was initiated in the late 20's and the genre *ryūkōka*, literally “popular song”, was created (Atkins 2001, p. 65). One style of this early pop genre was *jazu songu* (“jazz song”), which was defined as Western-style songs, either translated into Japanese or originals by Japanese composers and lyricists (ibid.), many of which would not sound very jazzy today (Hosokawa 2016, p. 51). Jazz began to gain mass popularity when the singer Teichi Futamura began writing and releasing original *jazu songu* (Molasky 2017, p. 4).

The year 1929 can be said to be the start of Japan's ‘Jazz Age’, a period where “musicians were in high demand, domestic and imported jazz recordings were widely available, opportunities for travel abroad were numerous, and new institutions—dance halls, jazz coffeehouses, studio and house bands, and a jazz press—appeared” (Atkins 2001, p. 68). Jazz emerged in a hostile political environment with a widening diplomatic rift with the West and a growing imperialistic presence in East Asia (ibid.). Yet, the jazz industry prospered despite, or perhaps even because of, the economic hardships as jazz and dance halls became a way of escaping them (ibid., p. 67). During this time there was a general increase in popularity of American imported goods and, consequently, their related English loanwords (Tomoda, p. 20). One representative such loanword was perhaps *modan* from the English “modern” which had added connotations of something “non-Japanese” and American (Hosokawa 2016, p. 51). At the same time as this developing modernism or Americanism there was also a lot of anti-Americanism. Jazz became a metaphor for Japan's participation in global cultural trends and

brought along issues of cultural identity and public morality, which was debated in the public (Atkins 2001, p. 67).

Just like the English loanword influx was halted and largely erased following the start of World War II, so was jazz. After the attack on Pearl Harbor jazz was labeled the music of the enemy and became a lot more difficult to both play and listen to (Molasky 2017, p. 7). Around 1000 popular jazz records were banned and it was forbidden to play jazz in many public places such as coffeehouses (Nagaoka 2017, p. 30). However, it didn't completely disappear but was played in response to the repression and censorship (Molasky 2017, p. 7).

After the war the Japanese jazz scene bounced back. Immediately after Japan's defeat in 1945 the occupation by the American forces began and the feelings that the Japanese had towards their conquerors were ambivalent: it was a mixture of deference and anger, awe and revulsion (Atkins 2001, p. 170). In the early postwar period jazz represented the cultural power of the victor as it blared from occupation-controlled radios and entertainment districts from American troops (ibid., p. 171). Jazz was perhaps even used as propaganda based on the belief that exposing the Japanese to it would make them more democratic, and Atkins writes that the role that the occupational forces had in promoting jazz in Japan cannot be overstated (ibid., pp. 173-174, 179). Apart from institutionalized factors, psychological factors also played a role in the development of jazz production. An important part of jazz is improvisation, and, through that, it has been associated with individual creativity and freedom (Saito 2020, pp. 2-3). This has led it to also be associated with the notion of "America" and embodying its ideals of freedom (ibid.). After Japan's defeat in the war, Japanese traditions were disavowed, and jazz appealed to a generation whose values had plummeted after the war, by being an "art of freedom" (Atkins 2001, p. 169).

During the occupation the Japanese jazz musicians made their living entertaining the American occupational forces and were often asked to play American songs (ibid., p. 168). In 1952 the Treaty of Peace and Security Treaty between the US and Japan came into force (Fukunishi 2004, p. 152). Although the occupational forces did not immediately withdraw, the number of jazz concerts specifically for US troops began to decline and opportunities for the musicians to play for Japanese audiences increased, and Japanese jazz musicians gained a mass audience (ibid.).

### **3. The study**

Section 3.1 will describe the purpose of this thesis and 3.2 the methodology. In subsection 3.3.1 the results from the quantitative study will be presented and discussed, and in 3.3.2 a qualitative analysis of the language mixing found will be presented. Potential weaknesses of the study will also be discussed.

#### **3.1 Purpose**

When it comes to the lyrical content of early Japanese jazz songs, there seems to be few studies on the topic compared to the interest shown towards modern genres such as J-pop. Molasky writes that jazz songs with lyrics, especially Japanese lyrics, were the most popular jazz songs before the war and in the early postwar period (2017, p. 7). That leaves the question, to what extent is English being used in these songs? And how is it used, that is to say, what kind of language mixing is visible?

The purpose of this study is to examine the usage of English in jazz lyrics in Japan before and after World War II. The primary research question is: to what extent is English used in jazz lyrics? This will be answered by first examining if English is the most used foreign language. Then, the percentage of songs containing English and how much English will be examined. As this was a period of much change, especially regarding the Japanese identity and American influence in jazz, there might be a change in the amount of English as well. Thus, the songs will be divided into being released before the attack on Pearl Harbor, during the American occupation, and immediate post-occupation. In order to see if translated works and original Japanese songs give different results those variables will be examined. Additionally, as gender has been shown to influence language usage in modern J-pop songs that variable will also be examined. The results will be compared to modern studies on J-pop and possible motivations behind the usage of English will be briefly discussed.

A second goal is to examine what type of language mixing can be seen. Firstly, it will be examined if there occurs any intra-sentential code-switching to English in Japanese sentences and vice versa. Secondly, intra-sentential CS and inter-sentential CS occurring at clause boundaries within Japanese verses will be examined to see if there are any interesting features. For example, are single words, phrases, or clauses the most common structures to switch to? Are there any particularly common words or phrases, or visible common categories such as ‘romance-related words’ like Takahashi and Calica (2015) have found? Are the structures generally simple or complex, grammatical or ungrammatical?

## 3.2 Methodology

In order to get as quantitative study as possible, the study is based on four CD albums that have compiled popular songs by Japanese singers from before and after World War II. These four albums are as follows: *Nippon Swingtime Senzen no Jazuongaku vol.1* (2021), *Originaru SP Genban niyoru Natsukashi no Jazu Popyurā Hittoshū ★Senzen hen★* (1985a), *Originaru SP Genban niyoru Natsukashi no Jazu Popyurā Hittoshū ★Sengo hen★* (1985b), and *Singu Singu Singu ~Shōwa no Jazu Songu Meishōsen* (2001). Occurrences of double entries have been excluded. In total, 100 unique songs have been analyzed, out of which 72 songs were released before the attack on Pearl Harbor (1928-1940), 15 during the American occupation (1949-1953), and 13 immediately post-occupation (1954-1957). Six out of the 100 songs are originally created in Japan, while the rest are covers which is a deep tradition in jazz.

The songs were coded for year of release, gender, and original (or cover) using the National Diet Library Japan's archive.<sup>1</sup> As very few song lyrics were available online each song was listened to twice to confirm its contents. All instances of non-Japanese words, phrases, sentences, or verses were noted down, as well as intra-sentential code-switching to Japanese. The songs were categorized as 'one or a few lexical items are in English', 'one to two thirds of the song is in English', and 'approximately the whole song is in English'.

Initially, both nativized loanwords and non-nativized words were examined as loanwords have been found to have a wide array of functions in modern genres such as J-pop (e.g., Takahashi & Calica 2015). However, unlike these modern studies, most of the loanwords found in this study seemed to have been borrowed to fill a lexical gap and thus perhaps not display any interesting nuances. In any case, loanwords are not included within the scope of this study and should perhaps be investigated in future studies. Likewise, proper nouns have been excluded for their strictly referential functions.

Differentiating between nativized loanwords and non-nativized words (which will be called code-switching in this study) is acoustically based. As very few songs lyrics were available online to read, it was not possible to base it on orthographic representation (i.e., Roman letters versus katakana), and it is difficult to know how accepted the words were in the Japanese speech community. Thus, it was decided that the criteria for determining if a word can be called code-switching or not is best based on the nativizing processes mentioned in section

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.ndl.go.jp/en/index.html>

2.1, namely if any additional vowels have been inserted to match Japanese’s strict C(j)V syllable structure and if sounds not in the Japanese sound system have been substituted.

### 3.3 Results & discussion

#### 3.3.1 Extent of English

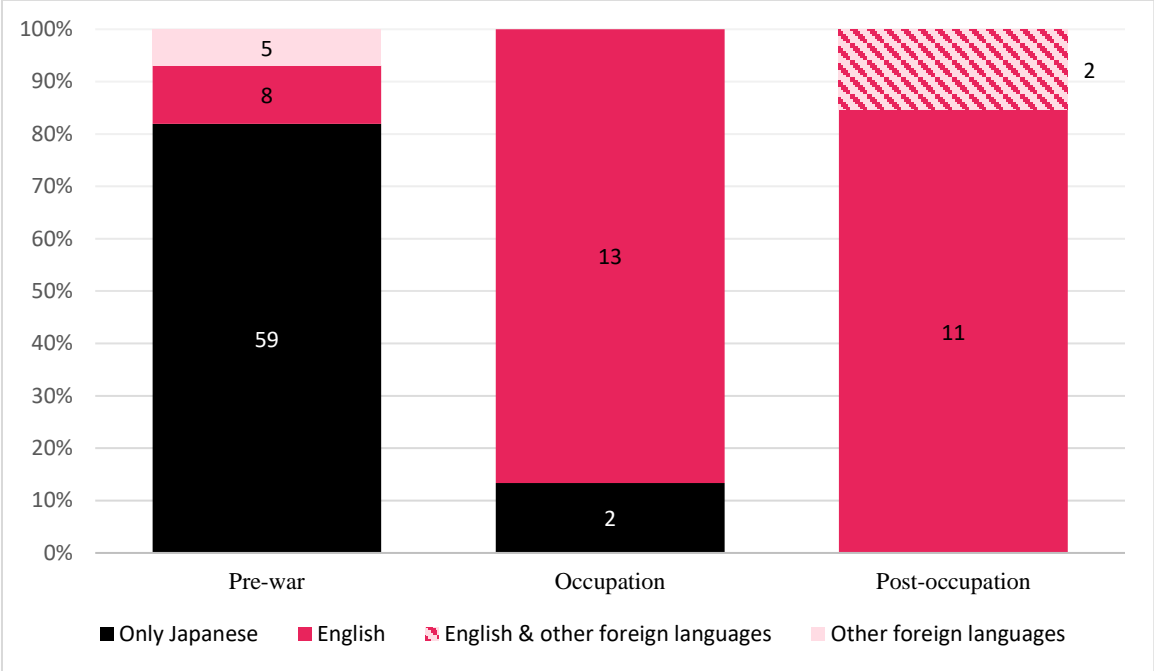


Figure 1: The distribution of languages used by song and period

Figure 1 shows that the majority of songs in the data exclusively contain Japanese. As for the foreign languages, 34% (34 songs) out of the 100 examined songs contain English and 7% (7 songs) contain other foreign languages, which diverges from modern findings in J-pop such as Stein (2023) who found that over half of the examined songs contained non-nativized words (ch. 3). However, when only looking at songs released after World War II, English occurs in 93% (26 songs) and a noticeable, sharp increase in the use of English over time can be seen. All 13 songs released after the occupation contain English. While it would be preferable to have more data from after the war, the results indicate a high usage of English which exceeds results from modern popular music studies.

English being the most used foreign language aligns with results from the previously mentioned studies on J-pop (e.g., Takahashi & Calica 2015). The other foreign languages found were Spanish, German, Italian, French and Hawaiian. The code-switches using these languages were primarily short phrases or single words.

In some cases, categorizing words was difficult. Specifically, “mama” and “papa” occurred a few times and have a very similar pronunciation in English and Japanese. It was decided not to count single instances but occurrences in phrases with other words that had not undergone adaptations. The single words might be loanwords that add interesting nuances in Japanese, but to investigate that is beyond the scope of this paper. Other potential issues that arose while gathering data were that the sound quality of the songs varied and that the author is not fluent in all mentioned languages and might have erred in the translations, but the results should give insights into general trends.

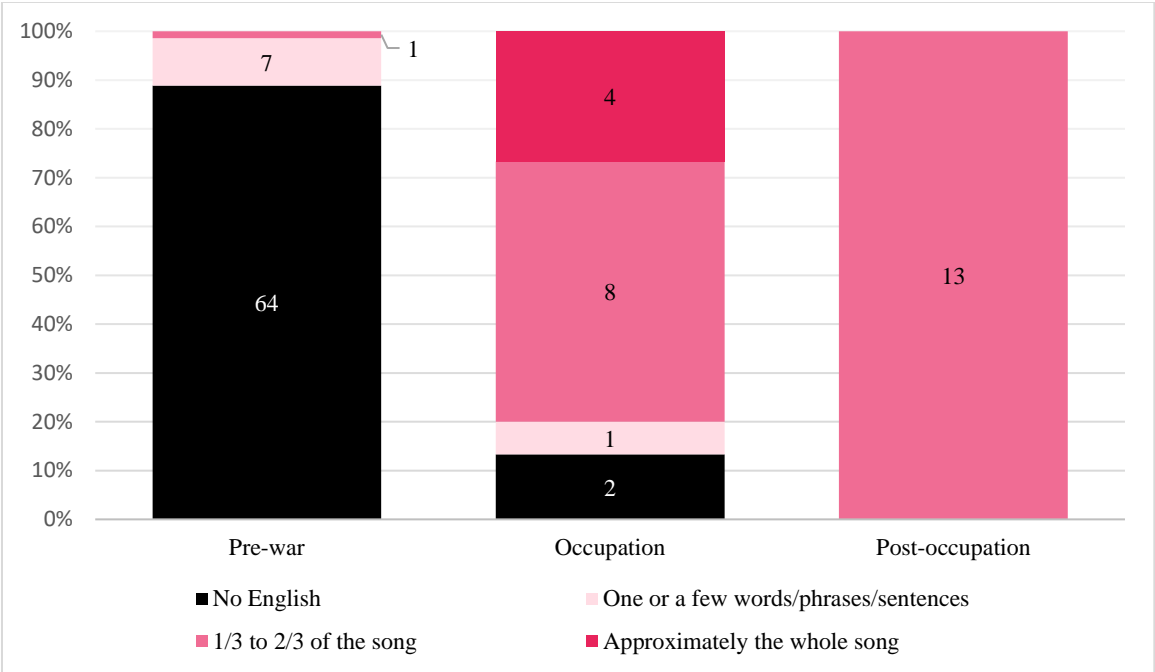


Figure 2: Amount of English use per song and period

The amount of English in the songs also seem to change over time as shown in figure 2. The songs released pre-war mostly contain one word or short phrase that might be repeated. Comparing them with the songs released postwar shows a clear increase in the amount of English. The songs released during the occupation show the most variety, where four songs are entirely in English or only contain one Japanese word. The most common structure that the writers employ using English seems to be a mixture of Japanese and English verses, often in an alternating pattern.

Stein (2023) writes that English in J-pop rarely occurs in substantial parts of the lyrics, but rather in the song title and keywords from the title repeated in the text (section 4.2, para. 1). Out of the single English phrases found in the lyrics, at least three types were

repetitions of the song title. However, in the data it is evident that English is being used in substantial parts of the text, at times dominating over Japanese. As previously mentioned, Molasky (2017, p. 7) writes that jazz songs with Japanese lyrics were the most popular during this time. The data seems to support this as only 4% (4 songs) of the songs are exclusively in a language other than Japanese.

It is impossible to know the exact motivations behind the usage of English in these songs. Perhaps the increase in English postwar reflects that the target audience moved to the US troops or even a more global audience, a possible function of J-pop discussed in section 2.2. Perhaps it was to give a nod towards the origin of jazz, another function of English in J-pop which has been discussed. Perhaps the usage of English reflects the deference that the Japanese felt towards the Americans as the occupational force and creators of jazz in general. On this Atkins (2001) writes that the standards of artistic originality and authenticity in Japanese jazz postwar were being set by American musicians which lead to a general sense of needing to “catch up” to American standards (pp. 167-168). This could be another instance of the myth of the Japanese as “expert imitators, but poor innovators” (Hosokawa 1999, p. 511), or it could be theorized that English was a way for these musicians to ‘authenticate’ their jazz.

As previously mentioned, Pennycook (2003) writes that a function of English is to ‘perform the Other’, i.e., to signal identification with other groups (pp. 515, 517). Atkins (2001) writes that one of the distinguishing traits of the postwar jazz community in Japan was that “the conventional racial hierarchy was inverted: the emerging consensus... favored black musicians as inherently bluesy and funky and thus superior players.” (p. 251). This led to a developing thought that the Japanese had a natural affinity with people of African descent due to sharing a history of white oppression, which allowed the musicians to continue playing without erasing the roots of the genre (ibid., p. 252). Toth (2008) explains that “[b]lack culture therefore might be understood as a space to comprehend the self, and experience Otherness.” (p. 124). He further writes that English, then, can be used to “engender the feeling of soul music” (ibid.). Perhaps the increased usage of English in postwar jazz reflects this change in attitudes and is used to signal solidarity and shared identity with African Americans, or to engender the feeling of jazz.

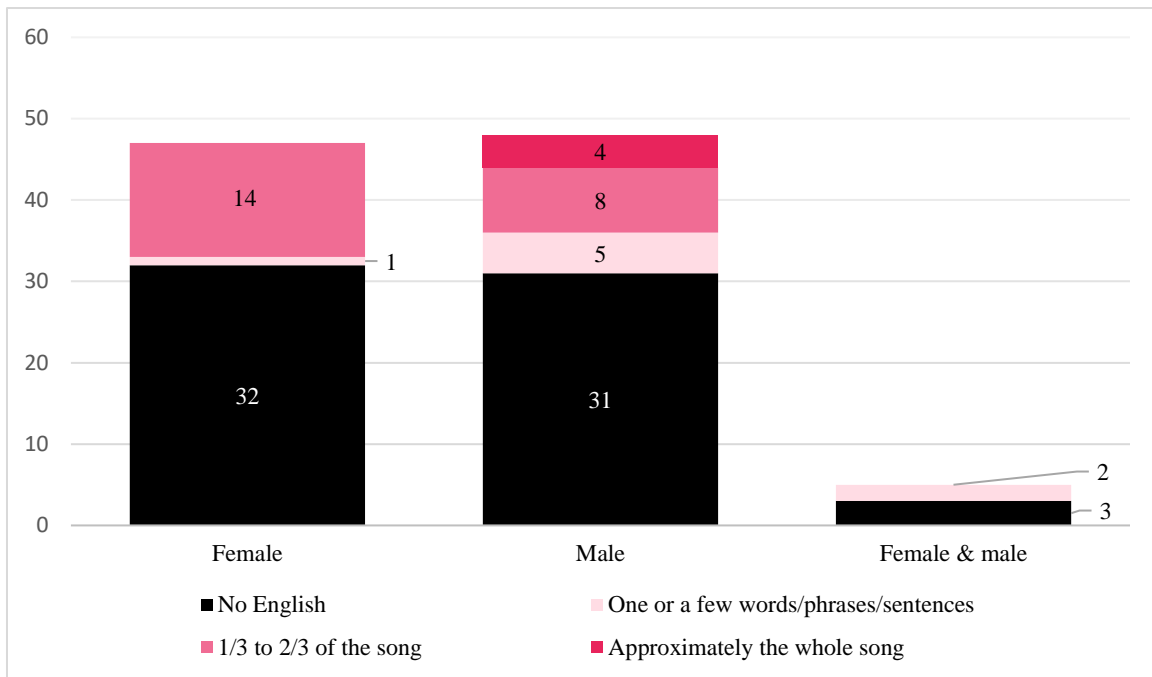


Figure 3: Amount of English use depending on gender of performer

The distribution of songs by female and male performers in the data is very even (figure 3). There is no noticeable difference when it comes to songs containing English: for female performers it is 32% (15 songs) and for male performers 35% (17 songs). Male performers seem to have a slightly greater variation in amount of English and they account for all four songs exclusively in English. Five songs are duets with both male and female singers and these contain little English. It can then perhaps be said that the usage of English does not seem to index neither masculinity nor femininity in these songs but rather seems to be the general norm.

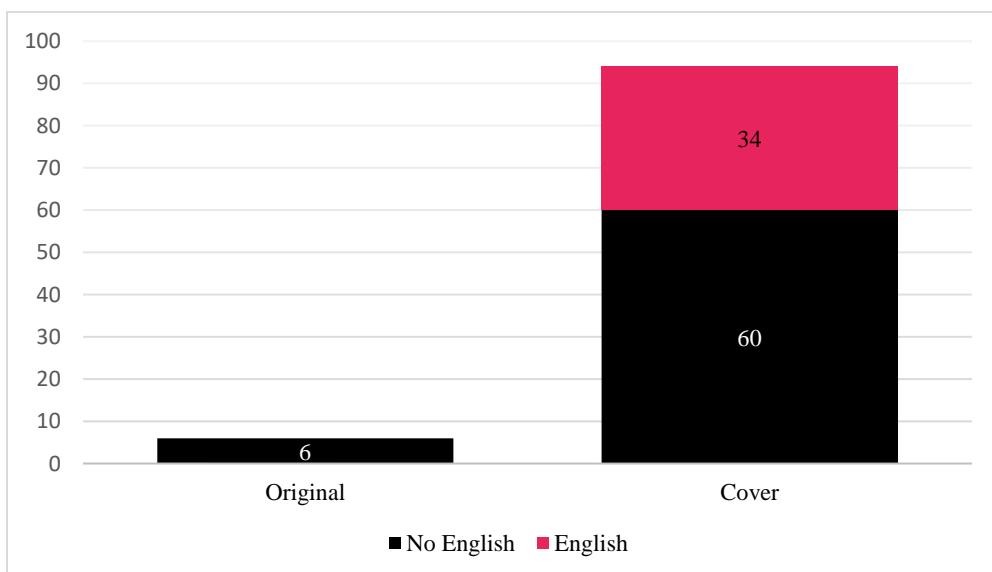


Figure 4: The distribution of English use in cover and original songs



The original songs did not contain any English whatsoever (figure 4). They are all released before the war when Japanese lyrics were the most popular (figure 1), and thus might only reflect this. The low number of original songs is likely a reflection of the deep tradition in jazz of covering other songs; in fact many songs were found to be well-known jazz standards. More data is wanted to give a more representative overview of its characteristics. As for the covers, 36% (34 songs) contain English, which shows a trend towards translating or replacing the original text.

### 3.3.2 Code-switching patterns

Both code-switching to English and Japanese occurs in the data. Examples (3-4) showcase single Japanese nouns within English sentences, while examples (5-6) showcase switching to English within a Japanese sentence (determined by their being in predominantly Japanese verses). Examples (5-6) also showcase switching using longer structures. English words are written in capital letters.

3) *MY tomodachi STOLE MY SWEETHEART FROM ME*

friend

“My friend stole my sweetheart from me.”

(from *Teneshī warutsu*, Frankie Sakai 1953a)

4) *GOODBYE TO MY tomodachi*

friend

“Goodbye to my friend.”

(from *Kanashiki kekkonshiki (namida no warutsu)*, Frankie Sakai 1953b)

5) *COME ON, hadashi-de kake-mawar-e*

barefoot-MANNER run-around-IMP

“Come on, run around barefoot.”

(from *Ame yo fure fure (ame ni utaeba)*, Frankie Sakai 1953c)

6) *Koyoi mo I LOVE YOU*

this.evening too

“I love you this evening too.”  
(from *Sasayaki*, Biji Kuroda 1953)

Inter-sentential code-switching occurs in the data as well, as in examples (7-8):

7) *OH MY PAPA. Kaer-anu papa*  
return-NEG papa  
“Oh my papa. (My) papa will never return.”  
(from *Ō mai papa*, Izumi Yukimura 1954)

8) *Setsunai kokoro ima-sugu tonde-iki-tai. I NEED YOU NOW*  
sad heart right-away fly-away-DES  
“(My) sad heart wants to fly away right now. I need you now.”  
(from *Ai nīdo yū nau*, Tadao Takashima 1955)

The CS tends to be grammatical and consist of simple structures. This is unlike the verses that are entirely in English and tends to be far of more advanced sentences. It has however not been investigated to what extent the English verses are kept from the original songs, but a tendency to do so has been noted. Thus, the verses and code-switches cannot be compared as to the English proficiency of the lyricists. Holmes & Wilson (2017) write that it is suggested that only proficient speakers switch intra-sententially and that less proficient speakers code-switch inter-sententially or only switch to short, fixed phrases or tags at the end of sentences (p. 46). Most of the observed code-switches involved short and fixed phrases, which could suggest that the speakers are not fully proficient in English. However, it was difficult to determine if intra- or inter-sentential was the most common CS as it was not always obvious if a phrase should belong to a sentence or not, which might be a general issue when analyzing song lyrics.

The most common word classes to switch to were interjections (oh, hey), pronouns (I, my) and nouns (baby, papa). The switches tended to be romance or kinship related. There is, however, not enough data to draw any interesting conclusions based on this. What can be concluded is that popular songs in early 20<sup>th</sup> century Japan did contain language mixing, just as popular songs seem to do today. English seems to have been an additional linguistic tool available for these lyricists.

## 4. Conclusion

This thesis has attempted to contribute to studies on the usage of English within Japanese music by analyzing song lyrics from popular Japanese jazz songs. The analysis has shown that English has a big presence in early to mid-20<sup>th</sup> century Japanese jazz. English is the most used foreign language and its usage increases sharply over time. It is used in most of the examined songs released after World War II, particularly after the American occupation. Gender, a variable that has been shown to affect language usage in modern J-pop, does not seem to have a noticeable effect on the results as both male and female performers tend to use the same amount of English, although male performers have slightly more variation and account for all four songs written exclusively in English. A variable that did affect the results was original versus cover songs; no examined song written by Japanese lyricists contained any English whatsoever, while approximately a third of the covers did.

In the songs, English is used for full verses and thus substantial parts of the text. Furthermore, it is used for both inter-sentential and intra-sentential code-switching. The switches tend to be short, fixed phrases or single lexemes. Code-switching to Japanese also occurs in the data. A more extensive study is wanted to give more accurate results, but the data suggests that English frequently occurred in early popular music just as it does today, and perhaps even more frequently at times.

It is very difficult to know the exact motivations for each artist in using English. The increase of English seems to suggest that its functions changed from before and after World War II. A few possible explanations have been discussed that have related jazz to its historical context. Such explanations are that the increase of English reflects the target audience moving from Japanese to American troops or to a global audience in general, that it is a nod towards the origins of jazz, i.e., America, or a way to authenticate jazz played by Japanese musicians. Perhaps it was used to signal identification and solidarity with African Americans or a way to engender the feeling of jazz. Jazz likely had strong American connotations, which brings up questions of what images and identities it projected.

Hopefully future research can give more insights into the motivations behind the usage of English to contribute to the study of music, identity and attitudes within linguistics. A difference in the original texts and the Japanese translations has also been noted and studying them might give interesting insights into cultural differences. Lastly, this study has just touched upon the beginnings of jazz in Japan, but attitudes in the community have continued to change and the author believes that it would be interesting to conduct similar studies into later decades.

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